

The Governor's proposal to eliminate the Children's Trust Fund is a dangerous gamble for the families in Connecticut and the future of the Nurturing Families Network Program. Without keeping the Children's Trust Fund and its programs intact, the following 'success story' would not have occurred.

"Nicola" was referred to the Nurturing Families Network Program in her fifth month of pregnancy. Nicola grew up in New Haven and went on to become the first person in her family to be accepted to college. Unfortunately, during her sophomore year, her grandmother became ill. Her grandmother was the legal guardian of Nicola's sisters' three (3) children, and was struggling to take care of them. Nicola left school to return to New Haven and take care of their grandmother and her nieces and nephews. When Nicola became pregnant shortly thereafter, she was resentful of her unborn child and realized that her dreams of escaping from the poverty that she grew up with were fast slipping away. She was not attending her prenatal visits routinely, and continued to smoke, drink and engage in other high risk behaviors. When program staff began working with Nicola, the façade of anger uncovered tremendous fear: fear of being stuck in the projects of New Haven, stuck in her job as a dishwasher, stuck caring for her sister's children who were rapidly getting out of control, and scared that her child was doomed to repeat her experienced as a child. Once Nicola started to talk, she never stopped. She allowed herself to talk about her fears and hopes – and that was all the opening that we needed. Staff worked on helping her bond with her unborn child and she allowed herself to feel excited about becoming a mother. Once Nicola's hours were reduced at her job, staff helped Nicola use this extra time by taking classes at a community college. They taught her the skills to take better care of her nieces and nephews and advocate better for their needs. Nicola's baby girl is now 6 months old – and doing quite well. Nicola brings her list of questions with her to all of the baby's medical appointments and has created a book of the baby's milestones to mark each stage of development. Nicola reads to her baby every night before she leaves for her community college classes. And she can confidently state that her daughter's childhood will be different than her own.

Thank you for this opportunity to share this testimony.